

NEWS FROM

CONGRESSMAN GEORGE MILLER

7th District, Calif., Senior Democratic Member, Committee on Resources.
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For a century, it has been said that in the American West, whiskey is for drinking, water is for fighting. Today, whiskey is still for drinking, but with the announcement of this historic plan, there may be peace in the California water wars.

Both Secretary Babbitt and Governor Davis, their staffs and the stakeholders who have labored to complete this plan deserve great credit. Having spent 25 combative years promoting water reform, I know that most policymakers have chosen to avoid the controversial decisions. In particular, I congratulate Governor Davis for focusing on water policy which has been a political minefield for his recent predecessors.

While I am cautiously optimistic that the CALFED plan will ultimately prove beneficial to all Californians and to the health of the Bay-Delta system, I want to emphasize that the final details of the plan must be closely examined before any final conclusions can be made.

CALFED is about getting results, not getting even. Water policy of the past produced stalemate, crisis, and confrontation that was bad for the environment, bad for taxpayers, and bad for California.

CALFED offers a *new* approach. Do I like everything in the package: no. The success of CALFED cannot be measured simply by whether I got 100% or someone else did, but rather by how far we have come in changing the direction of water policy for our state.

The list of CALFED mandates demonstrates that a new day of water reform has dawned:

- **an unprecedented dedication of resources — both financial and scientific — to the restoration, protection and maintenance of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, including its long-ignored levees;**
- **a strong commitment to improving the reliability and quality of our water supply;**
- **a vigorous commitment to restoring fisheries, wetlands and refuges;**
- **implementation of a long overdue groundwater management program;**
- **dedication to the principle that the beneficiary must pay for water supply improvements, not pass a multi-billion dollar bill on to the general taxpayer;**
- **substantial investments in generating greater water supplies through recycling, treatment, and conservation.**

That is, by anyone's standards, a major commitment to serious water policy reform.

I continue to have serious questions about whether this plan meets the "b(2)" fish restoration mandate contained in the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) that I authored in 1992. The Department of the Interior's b(2) plan, which took far too long to develop, has been upheld by a federal court, although it remains under challenge from those who persistently litigate and delay reform. We can live with some flexibility that allows the projects to meet multiple needs; we cannot accept major changes that undercut the legal mandate or the effectiveness of b(2).

My views, and those of the region I represent, on an isolated Delta conveyance facility are well known. Such a facility represents a potential threat to fisheries and Delta water quality and its inclusion in any final plan could seriously undermine the likelihood that Contra Costa Water District voters would approve the expansion of Los Vaqueros reservoir, a centerpiece of CALFED's storage program.

I congratulate Governor Davis, Secretary Babbitt, Secretary Nichols, Deputy Secretary Hayes and all of the others who have worked so hard on this plan. We will continue to work to make it even better over the next few months.

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Contact: John Lawrence
(202)225-6065
(202)225-9722